

A Paradigm Shift on Climate Change Under PM Modi

By invite



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At a time when proximity to a gurgling fresh water stream, lush green forest or just establishing a close connect with nature would require switching on our television sets or planning a weekend getaway, the World Environment Day provides a perfect opportunity to stop and introspect on where we are headed as individuals and as a community. As we mindlessly chase materialistic goals in pursuit of a "modern" lifestyle, are we conscious of what it entails? Fortunately, we have the wisdom of our ancestors to guide us. A harmonious coexistence with nature is part of the Indian DNA for centuries. The Indian values put a premium on simple living, respect for life and reverence of nature. This year's theme for the Environment Day 'Connect with Nature' inspires us to re-think and re-establish the lost harmony between humans and their environment in the spirit of "Vasudev Kutumbkam" (world is a family).

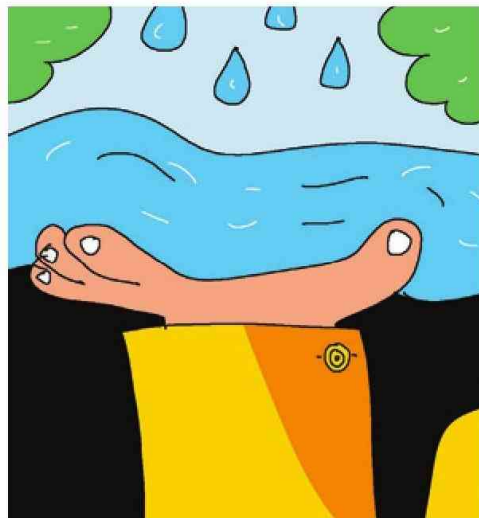
The Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in his Book "Convenient Action" aptly points out that sustainability is ultimately a moral issue since it involves protection of interests of our future generations. Climate change affects the future generations, which doesn't have a voice in the current choices of the present generation. It is a direct consequence of human interference with the natural environment based on western development models. Paradoxically, the fruits of unconstrained fossil fuel led industrialisation are being enjoyed by the developed countries, while, people in the developing countries like India suffer disproportionately more from the ensuing climate change impacts. It is therefore our moral obligation to ensure that global action on climate change takes into account the economic disparities between developing and developed countries and respects the right to development of the developing countries so that that the economically weak and vulnerable sections of society get justice under the climate regime.

The 21st Conference of Parties (COP) under United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) which was held in Paris in 2015 resulted in the landmark Paris Agreement. India took on a leadership role in these negotiations with our PM presenting an alternative narrative and championing the cause of poor and vulnerable. The notion of "climate justice" and "sustainable lifestyles" found a place in the Agreement as a result of his articulation and persuasiveness. The adoption of the Paris Agreement brought out the success of multilateralism, which involves a spirit of accommodation. Now, the success of this Agreement depends on the seriousness with

which the countries, particularly the developed countries, act on their commitments.

Back in 1928, Mahatma Gandhi had warned "God forbid that India should ever take to industrialism after the manner of the West". In consonance with these thoughts, Shri Narendra Modi has unleashed a vision that guides and inspires a transformational shift in the development paradigm to address many of the climate change concerns. With his nudging, climate change is being viewed as an "opportunity" rather than a "threat" for adopting a sustainable growth pathway, undertaking poverty alleviation measures and attracting investment.

Under the PM's leadership, India has adopted a cleaner and greener economic growth pathway, which is quoted as an inspiring example for the global community. India's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), submitted to the UNFCCC in 2015, articulates its ambitious sustainable development agenda. Combined with the SDGs and aspirational goal of providing "Energy Access for All" and "Housing For All" by 2022, it sets the foundation of a new and transformed India. NDC has eight goals covering all elements like mitigation, adaptation, finance, technology



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THE BIGGER PICTURE



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development & transfer and capacity building. Three of these are quantitative in nature which include reducing emission intensity of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 33-35% by 2030 from 2005 level, ensuring about 40% cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel based energy resources by 2030 and enhancing carbon sink (Forests) by an additional 2.5-3.0 billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent by 2030 through additional forest and tree cover.

In order to achieve these goals, the government is running one of the largest renewable capacity expansion programs in world. Establishment of solar parks, anchoring an international solar alliance, creation of Green Energy Corridors, implementation of the National Smart Grid Mission along with new programmes for increasing energy capacities from wind and waste conversion are key elements of this vision. The Smart Cities Mission will help make at least 109 Cities become less vulnerable to disasters, and efficient user of resources, and provide cheaper services. Along with these ef-

forts, the country has also introduced mechanisms for monitoring air quality and pollution control. In addition to the eight missions under the National Action Plan on Climate Change, new missions are being set up for Wind Energy, Health, and Coastal management. Other schemes are being implemented to promote organic farming, efficient irrigation systems, watershed management, soil health improvement etc. India has also set up a National Adaptation Fund with an initial corpus of INR 350 Crores to foster these efforts.

The broad policy initiatives of the Central government are supplemented by actions of the State Governments. In the spirit of cooperative federalism, the Centre has consistently encouraged the state governments to develop their own State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCCs). Till date, 32 States and Union Territories have formulated SAPCCs based on their local conditions and priorities to mainstream climate change concerns in their planning process. A number of pioneering initiatives and innovative projects have been taken up by them for addressing climate change.

PM Modi has advocated sustainable lifestyles, which is based on the principle of 'need based consumption' as an integral part of solution to climate change. We need to realize that high levels of resource consumption do not necessarily produce high levels of well-being, and that it is possible to produce high well-being without excessive consumption of the Earth's resources. Alternative lifestyle choices offer an opportunity to make a transition to low carbon sustainable lifestyle.

The results of the Global Survey on Sustainable Lifestyles (GSSL) published in Visions for Change by UNEP in 2011 reveal that young people are most concerned about poverty and the environment. Conscious engagement of the youth by means of education, training and awareness helps build capacity of our future citizens to make informed choices for designing a sustainable future. The government recognises the energy and potential of youth in making climate change a peoples' movement. It seeks their involvement and partnership to develop innovative solutions to address the challenge of climate change.

In order to create awareness among various sections of the society, especially students and youth, an innovative exhibition in train by the name of 'Science Express Climate Action Special' (SECAS) was first flagged off by the Government in 2015. It travelled across the country highlighting the global challenge of climate change and how each individual can contribute by reducing their own carbon footprint. It received an overwhelming response with participation of more 20 lakh people from various parts of the country. The new version of the SECAS is again spreading awareness on climate change this year.

If we are thorough with our preparations and sincere in our efforts, the future holds great promise. Policy response of the government coupled with grassroots action can build resilience that can help us tide over this challenge to a great extent. While we look-up to the global and national policy measures to curb the climate change menace, we must not forget that these are merely a reflection of our individual needs and aspirations. Therefore, as responsible global citizens we must be conscious of the everyday choices we make, take responsibility for our actions and step-up our efforts to safeguard and protect the environment.